

# WHAT'S IN A NAME? THE DECLINE IN THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOL NAMES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The names that school boards give to public schools can both reflect and shape civic values. It is increasingly rare for public schools to be named after presidents—or people, in general—and increasingly common to name schools after natural features. This shift from naming schools after people worthy of emulation to naming schools after hills, trees, or animals raises questions about the civic mission of public education and the role that school names may play in that civic mission.

After analyzing trends in public school names in seven states, representing 20 percent of all public school students, we obtained the following statistics:

- Of almost 3,000 public schools in Florida, five honor George Washington, compared with eleven named after manatees.
- In Minnesota, the naming of schools after presidents declined from 14 percent of schools built before 1956 to 3 percent of schools built in the last decade.
- In New Jersey, naming schools after people dropped from 45 percent of schools built before 1948 to 27 percent of schools built since 1988.
- In the last two decades, a public school built in Arizona was almost fifty times more likely to be named after such things as a mesa or a cactus than after a president.
- In Florida, nature names for schools increased from 19 percent of schools built before 1958 to 37 percent of schools built in the last decade.
- Similar patterns were observed in all seven states analyzed.
- Today, a majority of all public school districts nationwide do not have a single school named after a president.

Further research is necessary to identify the causes and consequences of these changes in the names given to public schools. The causes for the shift in school names may include broad cultural changes as well as changes in the political control of school systems. Given the weak outcomes for public schools on measures of civic education, the link between trends in school names and those civic outcomes is worthy of further exploration. Reports like this one can contribute to future research by providing basic facts on trends in school names as well as sparking discussion on the civic purposes of public schools and the role that school names play in those civic purposes.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Dr. Greene's research was cited four times in the Supreme Court's opinions in the landmark *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* case on school vouchers. His articles have appeared in policy journals such as *The Public Interest*, *City Journal*, and *Education Next*; in academic journals such as *The Georgetown Public Policy Review*, *Education and Urban Society*, and *The British Journal of Political Science*; as well as in newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*. He is the author of *Education Myths* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

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# WHAT'S IN A NAME? THE DECLINE IN THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOL NAMES

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## INTRODUCTION

Last year, the Fayetteville, Arkansas, public school district closed its aging Jefferson Elementary School, replacing it with a shiny new building on the other side of the highway. The new building needed a name; the school board could have transferred the Jefferson name along with the students but did not do so. Or they could have chosen the name of another president; for example, they could have honored Bill Clinton, who had been a law professor at the university in Fayetteville and later became governor and then president. But if Clinton was thought inappropriate for a school name, the board could have honored the late J. William Fulbright, who hailed from Fayetteville, graduated from its university, and was the university's president before serving five terms in the U.S. Senate. Indeed, there is no shortage of people the board could have chosen to honor. Instead, they chose to name the school "Owl Creek," after a small ditch with a trickle of water that runs by the school.

According to our analysis of trends in school names, the same story is playing out all over the country. It is increasingly rare for schools to be named after presidents—or people, in general—and increasingly common to name schools after natural features. In the case of presidents, this trend runs contrary to what one might expect to find. We continuously add to the list of available options every four to eight years when we elect new presidents, while new schools that need names are built every day. Yet today, the number of schools in America that are named after presidents has declined to fewer than 5 percent, and currently an overwhelming majority of

America's school districts do not have a single school named after a president.

This shift from naming schools after people worthy of emulation to naming schools after hills, trees, or animals raises questions about the civic mission of public education and the role that school names play in that civic mission. The names that school boards give to schools both reflect and shape civic values. They reflect values because naming a school after someone or something provides at least an implicit endorsement of the values that the name represents. And school names can shape values by providing educators with a teaching opportunity: teachers at a Lincoln Elementary, for example, can reference the school name to spark discussions of the evils of slavery and the benefits of preserving our union.

The difficulty with naming a school after a person is that it may provoke a debate over whether that person is worthy of emulation. To some, Lincoln freed the slaves and preserved the union, while to others he abused executive authority and trampled states' rights. To some, Jefferson articulated the founding principles of our nation, while to others he was a slaveholder. In New Orleans, the school board voted in 1997 to forbid naming schools after anyone who had owned slaves, forcing the renaming of a school honoring George Washington.<sup>1</sup> Even naming a school after a local educator can provoke a fight: Why this educator instead of that one? It was following just such an argument over naming a middle school after a local educator that the Fayetteville school board decided that they would rather honor ditches than dignitaries.

Because we believe that public schools can and should restore their civic mission, we have conducted this study of trends in school names. We are under no illusion that simply renaming a number of schools after historical figures will spark a significant improvement in civic values. But we believe that it is important to highlight and track trends in public school naming as an indicator of their civic commitment. In the following section, we review trends in school names from seven states, all of which show a marked decline in naming schools after people in general and presidents in particular, accompanied by a sharp increase in naming

schools after natural features. We then discuss potential consequences and causes for this shift in school names. Last, we consider possible remedies.

## RESULTS

We analyzed trends in public school names in seven states: Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsin. These states contain 20 percent of all public school students in the United States and are drawn from a variety of regions. While these seven states are not technically a representative sample, we believe that the consistent results from these states capture national patterns, given that they do represent the schools enrolling one in five public school students from different parts of the country.

To identify trends in school names, we obtained from these states a list of public school names with information on the age of the schools. States collect this information to assess the condition of their school infrastructure, but we used the information as a sort of "time machine." By comparing the names of schools that were built earlier with those built more recently, we could see how school names have changed. While data on the ages of schools are much more readily available than historical lists of schools, they provide an imperfect picture of the changes in school naming. We do not observe the names of schools that were closed and no longer exist. Unless schools with certain types of names are more likely to have closed than schools built at the same time with other names, using data on the ages of schools should give us an unbiased view of school names in previous periods.

For each state, we coded school names by type. Because certain types of names might be more prominent in a particular state, the categories used to classify school names were not identical across states. For example, naming schools after the space program is more common in Florida than in Minnesota, so there was a "space" category for Florida but not for Minnesota. In addition, the information available was not identical for each state. For example, for some states we had information on the street address and city of



the school, and for others we did not. The difference in the extent of information meant that a school might be identified as being named after the street or place in which it is located in one state but classified as “other” in a different state. Because of these data limitations, one should make comparisons across states with great caution. But none of these limitations should distort the picture over time within each state. For further details on how data were collected and coded, please see the Methodological Appendix.

In every state we examined, there has been a decline over time in the likelihood that schools will be named after people, in general, and presidents, in particular. Instead there has been a shift toward giving schools “nature” names. In Florida, 44 percent of schools built before 1958 were named after people (see Table 1). This rate steadily dropped so that only 26 percent of schools built in the last decade are named for people. Florida schools named for presidents declined from 6.5 percent of those built before 1958 to 0.9 percent of those built in the last decade. If we include founding figures, such as Hamilton and Franklin, and southern leaders, such as Davis and Lee, with presidents, the decline is from 10.1 percent to 1.1 percent. Meanwhile, nature names increased from 19 percent of schools built before 1958 to 37 percent of schools built in the last decade.

This shift in school naming has resulted in a current mix of school names that gives priority to nature names over presidents’ names. Of almost 3,000 public schools in Florida, only 59 are named after presidents, while 155 are named after lakes, 91 after woods, and 54 after palm trees. Only five schools in Florida honor George Washington, compared with eleven named after manatees. In Florida, the sea cow trumps the father of our country.<sup>2</sup>

In Minnesota, the naming of schools after presidents declined from 14 percent of schools built before 1956 to 3 percent of schools built in the last decade (see Table 2). Comparing the same time periods, the naming of schools after natural features increased from 11 percent to 31 percent.

In New Jersey, 16 percent of schools built before 1948 were named after presidents, compared with 6

percent in the last two decades (see Table 3). If we include founding figures with presidents, the decline is from 21 percent to 7 percent. Naming schools after people in general dropped from 45 percent of schools built before 1948 to 27 percent of schools built since 1988, while nature names went from 12 percent to 21 percent.

The shift to nature names is particularly striking in Arizona (see Table 4). Before 1948, only 13 percent of schools were given nature names. Since 1988, 50 percent of schools have been named after natural features or animals. During the same time comparison, the naming of schools after presidents dropped from 9 percent to 1 percent. In the last two decades, a public school built in Arizona was almost fifty times more likely to be named after such things as a mesa or a cactus than after a leader of the free world.

In Massachusetts, the shift in naming patterns seems less dramatic (see Table 5). Even before 1948, only 4.6 percent of public schools were named after presidents, compared with 3.2 percent since 1988. Naming schools after people in the Bay State dropped from 62 percent before 1948 to 44 percent since 1988. And comparing the same time periods, schools with nature names rose from 6 percent to 12 percent. While the changes do not appear as striking in Massachusetts, the same trends observed in other states are found there as well.

The changes in Ohio are also more subtle (see Table 6). Naming schools after presidents declined from 10 percent of schools built before 1948 to 6 percent of schools built after 1987. If we include founding figures with presidents, the decline is somewhat more pronounced, from 13 percent of schools built before 1948 to 7 percent of schools built in the last two decades. Nature names increased from 9 percent to 14 percent, comparing the same periods.

Wisconsin appears to have a large shift away from naming schools after presidents, dropping from 17 percent of schools built before 1950 to 3 percent of schools built between 1980 and 1999 (see Table 7). Naming schools after people plummeted from 53 percent of schools built before 1950 to 25 percent built

between 1980 and 1999. During those same periods, nature names more than doubled, from 16 percent to 33 percent. We should have less confidence in the precision of these results from Wisconsin because the data that the state collected on the ages of schools did not include information on all school districts.

But we should have strong confidence in the overall picture that emerges from these seven states. Across the United States, we have seen a significant move away from naming schools after historical figures, such as presidents and founders, and even a move away from naming schools after people. Instead, we've seen a big increase in giving schools nature names—naming them after such things as lakes, meadows, and animals.

## CONSEQUENCES

Naming schools after people consumes political capital that the coalitions governing schools are increasingly unwilling to spend. But shrinking from a fight over naming schools may be symptomatic of a broader problem with civic education. To teach civics effectively, schools have to be willing to take a stand. To teach tolerance, they have to be intolerant of intolerance. To teach the virtues of democracy and liberty, schools have to argue that democracies are superior systems of government. The unwillingness of school boards to take stands when naming schools may indicate a reluctance to take the stands necessary to teach civics effectively.

The relationship between the political resolve necessary to name schools after people and the political resolve necessary for effective civic education is worthy of attention because it is clear that public schools are falling short in their civic mission. According to the U.S. Department of Education's 2006 assessment of civics knowledge, only 27 percent of twelfth-graders demonstrated proficiency, and one-third scored below the "basic" level.<sup>3</sup> More than a third of twelfth-graders didn't know that the First Amendment protects freedom of worship.<sup>4</sup> In a recent review of the research, public schools were found to trail private schools in their effectiveness at promoting political tolerance, voluntarism, and political participation among their

students.<sup>5</sup> Ironically, the public school system was established on the explicit belief that government control as well as operation of schools was necessary to ensure proper civic values.

## CAUSES

What is responsible for these shifts in school naming? To some extent, the change in school names is a reflection of broader cultural changes, including increased skepticism of inherited wisdom, revisionist history, and increased interest in the environment. But attributing the change to culture is an insufficient explanation. Culture partially shapes the decisions of political leaders, but culture can also be a product of the decisions of political leaders. The question is, why are the political leaders who are in control of school names—school board members—increasingly reluctant to fight for names that honor individual people?

This study is not designed to address this question empirically. Future research, however, could explore whether the answer may be found in the narrowing of the coalitions governing schools. Other researchers have documented that a variety of "Progressive" reforms have reduced broad, democratic control of schools.<sup>6</sup> Over the last several decades, school boards have become increasingly likely to operate independently of city or town governments and to be elected directly rather than appointed by mayors or other elected officials. In addition, those elections are increasingly likely to be held on off-election days: days when no other political officials are elected.

Political scientists Michael Berkman and Eric Plutzer describe the effects of these Progressive reforms: "Without the need to incorporate other local or city concerns into their calculations, these school boards were expected to act with an ethos of doing 'what is best for the schools' rather than through the more political calculus of partisan office holders. By restricting themselves to the responsibility of making good school policy, they would not have to respond to demands and concerns about other aspects of community politics."<sup>7</sup> Education historian David Tyack described these

reforms as undermining broad democratic control in the name of democracy: “[The Progressives] praised the democratic purposes of public schooling but sought to remove the control of schools as far as possible from the people.”<sup>8</sup> The effects of these reforms were to decrease the influence of political machines by taking power away from mayors and by focusing on an off-day electorate that was more concerned with school policies than with partisan elections.

These reforms have narrowed the coalition governing schools to the relatively small number of people who are motivated to vote in an off-day election. Often these coalitions are dominated by teachers or other school employees, who are a significant percentage of the highly motivated people who take the trouble to vote in off-day school elections. These coalitions are focused on the narrow concerns that motivated them to show up on the off-day election and are less likely to be willing to expend political capital on such issues as school names and policies for civic education.

Obviously, additional research is necessary to examine empirically the relationship between school governance practices, school naming, and civic education. But it is reasonable to suspect that the increasing reluctance of school boards to take the stands necessary to name schools after individual people and promote civic education is related to their narrow focus on school employee contract negotiations.

## SOLUTIONS

Significant changes in school names and civic education are certain to be slow in the making. Any efforts to reinvigorate the civic mission of public schools will include broad cultural changes. Reports like this one can contribute to those cultural changes by providing basic facts on trends in school names as well as sparking discussion on the civic purposes of public schools and the role that school names play in those civic purposes.

Other solutions may involve broadening the political coalitions governing schools. Helping swing the pendulum back to mayoral control of school systems may expand the coalitions governing schools, since mayors tend to be elected in higher-turnout elections than school board members. Moving school elections to days when elections for other offices are held may also bring broader civic concerns into school policy discussions.

We should continue to monitor trends in school names and to explore the relationship between what we name schools and the civic outcomes of public education.

## TABLES

Table 1 — Trends in School Names in Florida

Year Built	President	Founder	Southern Leader	Other People	People Sub-Total	Nature	Street	Function	Place	Direction	Space	Other	Non-People Sub-Total	N
Earliest to 1957	6.5%	0.7%	2.9%	33.8%	43.9%	18.7%	1.4%	5.8%	15.1%	1.4%	0.0%	13.7%	56.1%	139
1958 to 1967	3.3%	0.4%	0.4%	29.8%	33.8%	25.4%	2.2%	1.8%	20.6%	1.8%	0.7%	13.6%	66.2%	272
1968 to 1977	3.0%	0.1%	0.7%	26.2%	30.1%	27.2%	2.6%	0.9%	26.7%	2.1%	1.0%	9.4%	69.9%	701
1978 to 1987	1.2%	0.7%	0.0%	21.9%	23.8%	31.1%	1.0%	1.6%	29.0%	3.3%	0.4%	9.8%	76.2%	676
1988 to 1997	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	25.4%	26.5%	42.5%	0.2%	2.7%	15.9%	1.4%	1.4%	9.5%	73.5%	661
1998 to 2007	0.9%	0.0%	0.2%	24.6%	25.7%	36.8%	0.5%	3.8%	15.1%	1.3%	0.5%	16.2%	74.3%	549
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>32.7%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>21.6%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>2998</b>

Table 2 — Trends in School Names in Minnesota

Year Built	President	Founder	Other People	People Sub-Total	Nature	Function	Place	Direction	Other	Non-People Sub-Total	N
Earliest to 1955	14.0%	1.0%	4.0%	19.0%	11.0%	19.0%	21.0%	7.0%	23.0%	81.0%	100
1956 to 1965	12.3%	1.6%	5.5%	19.4%	19.2%	6.3%	26.1%	4.8%	24.2%	80.6%	495
1966 to 1975	7.3%	1.2%	4.4%	12.9%	24.3%	9.4%	32.4%	5.6%	15.4%	87.1%	481
1976 to 1985	1.5%	1.5%	4.0%	7.0%	16.0%	8.5%	50.5%	3.0%	15.0%	93.0%	200
1986 to 1995	2.7%	0.0%	4.3%	7.1%	31.0%	10.3%	33.2%	1.1%	17.4%	92.9%	184
1996 to 2005	3.1%	0.0%	3.8%	6.9%	30.5%	19.1%	29.0%	2.3%	12.2%	93.1%	131
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>13.4%</b>	<b>22.1%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>18.5%</b>	<b>86.6%</b>	<b>1591</b>

Table 3 —Trends in School Names in New Jersey

Year Built	President	Founder	Other People	People Sub-Total	Nature	Other	Non-People Sub-Total	N
Earliest to 1947	15.7%	5.6%	23.8%	45.2%	12.1%	42.7%	54.8%	445
1948 to 1967	9.8%	3.9%	24.9%	38.6%	24.4%	37.0%	61.4%	438
1968 to 1987	5.9%	0.5%	25.7%	32.0%	18.0%	50.0%	68.0%	222
1988 to 2007	6.0%	1.3%	19.5%	26.8%	20.8%	52.3%	73.2%	149
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	<b>38.4%</b>	<b>18.5%</b>	<b>43.1%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>	<b>1254</b>

Table 4 —Trends in School Names in Arizona

Year Built	President	Founder	Nature	Other	N
Earliest to 1947	9.0%	1.0%	13.0%	77.0%	100
1948 to 1967	4.1%	0.9%	17.1%	77.9%	339
1968 to 1987	2.9%	0.4%	31.3%	65.4%	448
1988 to 2006	1.2%	0.6%	49.6%	48.6%	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>63.2%</b>	<b>1387</b>

Table 5 — Trends in School Names in Massachusetts

Year Built	President	Founder	Other People	People Sub-Total	Nature	Street	Place	New Other	Non-People Sub-Total	N
Earliest to 1947	4.6%	2.4%	54.4%	61.5%	6.2%	6.4%	18.1%	7.9%	38.5%	454
1948 to 1967	3.4%	1.1%	45.5%	50.1%	9.9%	3.8%	27.2%	9.1%	49.9%	707
1968 to 1987	1.0%	2.6%	43.3%	46.9%	9.8%	2.0%	33.2%	8.1%	53.1%	307
1988 to 2006	3.2%	0.9%	39.7%	43.7%	11.7%	2.9%	30.6%	11.1%	56.3%	343
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>46.3%</b>	<b>51.2%</b>	<b>9.3%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>26.6%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>48.8%</b>	<b>1811</b>

Table 6 —Trends in School Names in Ohio

Year Built	President	Founder	Other People	People Sub-Total	Nature	Other	Non-People Sub-Total	N
Earliest to 1947	10.0%	2.9%	6.5%	19.4%	9.0%	71.6%	80.6%	1102
1948 to 1967	6.1%	1.3%	10.0%	17.3%	16.3%	66.4%	82.7%	1266
1968 to 1987	5.4%	1.9%	10.2%	17.4%	16.1%	66.5%	82.6%	373
1988 to 2007	6.0%	0.6%	5.7%	12.2%	14.0%	73.7%	87.8%	335
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	<b>13.4%</b>	<b>69.1%</b>	<b>82.5%</b>	<b>3076</b>

Table 7 —Trends in School Names in Wisconsin

Year Built	President	Founder	Other People	People Sub-Total	Nature	Other	Non-People Sub-Total	N
Earliest to 1949	16.7%	2.0%	34.2%	52.9%	15.7%	31.4%	47.1%	395
1950 to 1959	10.7%	2.5%	25.9%	39.2%	26.4%	34.4%	60.8%	401
1960 to 1979	6.1%	1.6%	30.9%	38.6%	22.5%	38.8%	61.4%	559
1980 to 1999	3.1%	0.4%	21.9%	25.4%	33.3%	41.2%	74.6%	228
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>29.2%</b>	<b>40.4%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>36.2%</b>	<b>59.6%</b>	<b>1583</b>

For this analysis, we used data on the age of public school buildings from seven states: Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Each school on these lists was coded according to a predetermined set of categories (see below). The data set received from each state was different; therefore, we varied the categories that we used to code school names. In addition, we did not use exactly the same categories for each state, to better capture the various cultural features across these seven states—the ideas, locations, natural features, and so on, that are significant for each state. For example, we found that more schools were named after space shuttles in Florida than in Minnesota.

Arizona schools were divided into eight categories: President, Founder, Other People, Nature, Function, Place, Direction, and Other. A school was classified as “President” if it was named after a president of the United States; “Founder” was used for schools named after a founding figure of the United States who was not also a president; “Other People” was used for schools named after a person who was not a president of the United States or a founding figure; a school coded as “Nature” was named for a natural feature or animal including, but not limited to, mountains, rivers, hills, and creeks; “Other” was used to code those schools named for something not included in these categories.

In Florida, schools were divided into eleven categories. As in Arizona, we included the categories of “President,” “Founder,” “Nature,” and “Other.” We added the categories of “Southern Leader,” “Street,” “Function,” “Place,” “Direction,” and “Space.” A school was classified as “Southern Leader” if it was named for a prominent individual in the Confederacy; a school was coded as “Street” if it had the same name as the street on which it was located. The “Function” category was used for those schools named for their purpose (for example, “school of the arts” or “polytechnic institute”). A school was coded as “Direction” if it was named North, South, East, West, Central, or some other word that denoted direction or location. The “Space” category was used for those schools named after a space program or vehicle.

In Massachusetts, schools were classified into the following categories, as described for Arizona and Florida: President, Founder, Other People, Nature, Street, Place, and Other. The “Place” category was used for those schools named after the city or district in which the school was located.

In Minnesota, schools were classified into the following categories: President, Founder, Other People, Nature, Function, Place, Direction, and Other.

In New Jersey, the following categories were used: President, Founder, Other People, Nature, and Other.

In Ohio, schools were coded as President, Founder, Other People, Nature, and Other.

In Wisconsin, schools were coded as President, Founder, Other People, Nature, and Other. The Wisconsin data set did not include all school districts in the state, so Wisconsin results should be treated with less confidence.

There is a fair amount of overlap and ambiguity in the coding of some schools into the above categories. In general, we attempted to follow a set of decision-rules that would allow for the coding to be as consistent as possible, at least within each state. For example, a school was considered to be named after a president if it had the same name as a president even if that name was also the name of the city or district in which the school was located. Presidents’ names trumped all other categories. Because we know the complete set of presidents’ names and because we coded

schools as named after presidents with a clear, broad decision-rule, our results in the president category are likely to be the most consistent and reliable.

With other categories, it was more difficult to ensure perfect consistency. A school name might appear to be a person's surname, but that might also be the name of the city or district where the school was located or of a natural feature in the area. We attempted to resolve those ambiguities as best as we could, given the information available from each state. But because the information from each state was not always complete or consistent, these ambiguities could not always be resolved in the same way, within and across each state.

The net effect of these data and coding difficulties is that there is some degree of error in how schools are classified, at least in categories that are less objective than the president category. These errors are unlikely to be correlated with the year that the school was built, so our analysis of trends over time should be unbiased. But the degree and direction of error should be associated with the state in which each school is located, since different states provided different-quality data. This means that comparisons across states, other than for naming schools after presidents, should be made with great caution.

To compile our national descriptive statistics, we analyzed data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data for 2005-2006. We conducted name searches for all presidents and converted the numeric totals into a percentage of the universe of public schools (the specific total was 4.47%). This likely overestimates the number of schools named after presidents, because in cases of common names, such as Johnson or Wilson, we gave the school the benefit of the doubt. In all likelihood, the actual percentage of public schools named after presidents is even lower than our figures report.



1. Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 24.
2. It is worth noting that three of the eleven schools named after manatees are in Manatee County. Nevertheless, from a methodological point of view, schools that are named after their home counties should not significantly affect the overall results of our analysis. Florida also has a Washington County, with one Washington-named school, a Jackson County with one school named after Jackson, and a Madison County with two schools named after Madison. If anything, county name transference to school names should increase the presence of presidents, not decrease it, because counties are often named after presidents. In the end, 8 of Florida's manatee named schools are not in Manatee county, which still exceeds the number of schools in Florida named after Washington.
3. See the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) results at [http://nationsreportcard.gov/civics\\_2006/c0103.asp?tab\\_id=tab3&subtab\\_id=Tab\\_1#chart](http://nationsreportcard.gov/civics_2006/c0103.asp?tab_id=tab3&subtab_id=Tab_1#chart). Accessed on June 15, 2007.
4. See Question 18 from the 2006 NAEP civics exam, Block 12C7, at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls/searchresults.asp>. Accessed on June 15, 2007.
5. Patrick J. Wolf, "Civics Exam," *Education Next* (summer 2007), at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/7460537.html>. Accessed on June 15, 2007.
6. See, e.g., Michael B. Berkman and Eric Plutzer, *Ten Thousand Democracies: Politics and Public Opinion in America's School Districts* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press), 2005.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
8. David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 167.

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